

APPENDIX

Demonstration Project Profiles

1. Arizona Community Action Association Phoenix, Arizona

I. Overview of the Demonstration Project

The Arizona Community Action Association [ACAA] is a collection of 29 local community action agencies that serve residents throughout Arizona. The organization acts as a catalyst in assisting communities and groups to identify poverty-related problems and devise local solutions.

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, three quarters of a million Arizonans are living at or below 125% of the federally established poverty guidelines. ACAA staff believed that many of these people were in need of services to alleviate their problems, but did not know how to gain access to them. Prior to the current project, ACAA sponsored and held community meetings to elicit problems people had in reaching services. In response to this information, ACAA staff proposed a demonstration that would consist primarily of the production and dissemination of media messages to Hispanic and Navajo people about the Food Stamp Program [FSP]. This media campaign was to include developing and distributing posters, brochures, and flyers in Spanish and the Navajo languages throughout the targeted communities, including through the school system; conducting a public awareness campaign about the Gleaning Coalition's activities [fields are reaped after the harvest has been picked]; and presenting information to and gathering information from people around the State.

II. Project Activities

Project staff followed through on most of the proposed activities. They produced bilingual flyers entitled, "Facts about the Food Stamp Program" and distributed them to ten elementary schools. They developed a Spanish food stamp poster and printed 3,000 color copies. These were distributed to food banks, supermarkets, senior centers, WIC programs, and Community Action Agencies. Ten thousand food stamp brochures were also developed, which were targeted to Navajo Nation reservation residents. This brochure was written in the Navajo language at a basic reading level and was intended to be culturally sensitive. During the course of the project, ACAA also promoted the Department of Economic Security and Family Assistance Administration hotline number for information about food stamps.

III. Lessons Learned from the Demonstration

The emphasis on media in this project did not lead to insights into the nature of problems clients and potential clients encountered when accessing the FSP. Much project time was spent in the development and distribution of information processes and relatively little in actual interactions with Native Americans and other target groups.

IV. Findings

The project was successful in gaining cooperation from other private and public organizations to increase the production and distribution of its products.

In meeting with clients and Community Action Agency staff around the State, project staff identified several problems that clients have with applying to the FSP: clients often find the application too difficult and the hours of operation of local food stamp offices are difficult to match with work schedules for many clients, particularly for agricultural workers.

| |
|--------------------------------|
| GRANT AMOUNT - \$98,000 |
|--------------------------------|

V. Conclusions

The nature of this project made it an "outlier" in terms of obtaining any conclusive evidence of its effectiveness. The grant allowed ACAA to support many of its activities and to increase awareness of the FSP among populations groups with a high level of poverty.

2. Southern California Interfaith Hunger Coalition Los Angeles, California

I. Overview of the Demonstration Project

The Interfaith Hunger Coalition [IHC] was established in 1975 to address issues focusing on hunger among people living in poverty in the greater Los Angeles area. IHC has started food pantries for the hungry and developed numerous publications, known as street sheets, informing the poor about available food resources in Los Angeles County. The organization is dedicated to working with local, State, and Federal levels of government to prevent and alleviate hunger through education, technical assistance, advocacy, and empowerment of emergency service providers.

Based on their own experience with the poor, IHC staff believed that almost half the eligible households in their area did not participate in the Food Stamp Program [FSP]. Reasons believed to contribute to this lack of participation included a lack of knowledge about the program, its qualifying criteria, and required documentation of income, assets, and housing circumstances. Other issues identified that affect FSP enrollment were the difficulty of transportation for clients in an area noted for its dependence on automobiles; language difficulties for many non-English-speaking populations in the Los Angeles region, which included Spanish-, Korean-, Chinese-, Vietnamese-, Russian-, and Farsi-speakers among others; the social stigma associated with the use of food stamps; and, the difficulty of dealing with the paperwork and providing the appropriate documentation to meet eligibility requirements.

The primary goal of the project was to improve the availability of information about food stamps to those potentially eligible to participate in the FSP. In order to improve the opportunities for those clients who were eligible and interested to enroll, project staff intended to assist them to complete the necessary eligibility forms, provide transportation for them to food stamp offices, help them overcome language barriers, and handle stigmatizing effects associated with applying for food stamp relief. IHC designed the project to demonstrate the effectiveness of multi-agency partnerships in addressing the needs of low income people.

IHC was the lead agency of a coalition of five agencies all seeking to improve access to food among "hard to reach" populations within central Los Angeles, including the Mission District and West Hollywood. As the lead agency, IHC planned to coordinate project efforts, including developing and producing food stamp informational materials, devising technical assistance and client advocacy strategies for client enrollment assistance to the FSP, and serving as the liaison to local Departments of Public and Social Services. Assistance would be integrated with the ongoing efforts of existing community organizations already working with a given population. Four specific "hard to reach" target groups were selected for food stamp assistance, including:

- Homeless individuals and homeless substance abusers. These individuals were to be the target group of Homeless Health Care, Inc. [HHC], a non-profit group working to improve the health of the homeless throughout Los Angeles County, but predominantly concentrating their efforts in South Central Los Angeles.
- Low-income families, particularly Hispanic women and children in Central and West Los Angeles receiving AFDC benefits. These families would be assisted as part of the Child Health Care Advocacy Project of the Child Advocacy Institute [CAI].
- Recent immigrant and refugee older persons from the former Soviet Union. Jewish Family Service [JFS], which operated in the West Hollywood district of Los Angeles County, intended to target this population group.
- Skid-Row homeless [predominantly African Americans] in Central and East Los Angeles. Members of the General Relief Advocacy Project [GRAP], a non-profit group founded in 1990 by former homeless individuals, would assist these people.

Under the leadership of IHC, the coalition worked closely with the Los Angeles County Department of Public and Social Services [DPSS] and a local food stamp office in which a liaison to the project resolved food stamp eligibility issues. Representatives of each involved agency intended to meet monthly to discuss how the project was proceeding and what steps could be taken to overcome any difficulties encountered.

II. Project Activities

Project activities focused on four types of food stamp assistance efforts: [1] identifying potential food stamp clients; [2] providing assistance to potential clients; [3] providing technical assistance and training to other Coalition members; and, [4] expanding the availability of published materials. Where necessary, these materials would be translated into the language of the target groups. Each member of the coalition had the following specific areas of concentration.

- IHC, in addition to monitoring the progress of the project, developed, translated, and distributed media materials as well as provided technical assistance to other Coalition members. IHC also continued to manage an ongoing phone hotline to respond to queries about food pantries, feeding stations, and food stamps.
- HHC used Street Outreach Teams to reach homeless adults, women and children, substance abusers, and persons with AIDS and tuberculosis. These teams conducted informational meetings and focus groups concerning the FSP.
- CAI worked closely with low-income families and in particular with women and children. Outreach activities were conducted in association with other social service agencies in the county, especially the WIC program.

- JFS assisted IHC in translating food stamp information materials into Russian and Farsi, assisted in distributing these materials, and conducted individual interviews and group meetings with potential clients [mostly recent refugees admitted to the U.S.] at their West Hollywood Multi-Service Center.
- GRAP provided on-site outreach client assistance to the homeless on the street and in Department of Public and Social Services [DPSS] central district offices, enabling persons to obtain food stamps, usually through expedited review.

The project was implemented more slowly than originally expected and was affected by unanticipated delays. Los Angeles experienced a major earthquake on January 14, 1994 centered in the San Fernando Valley. As a result of this event, a massive demand for additional social services for the victims of the earthquake took precedence over the demonstration project. In fact, IHC produced an additional 250,000 copies of their publication "How to Get Food," paid for by the USDA, to distribute to the new homeless. In January and February of 1994, IHC focused most of its energies on addressing the needs of the earthquake victims with no project data provided until March 1994.

Despite these problems, the project did provide information on the FSP to a large group of diverse populations, particularly the homeless population in Central Los Angeles. Coalition members distributed a number of flyers and other materials on food stamp procedures, which were translated into the language of the target populations. Also, some very useful public service announcements were developed and run on local radio and television.

The demonstration project was also the focus of a Los Angeles Times article discussing hunger and the considerable role that the FSP was playing in alleviating hunger in the region. In addition, project staff from IHC provided FSP training to other Coalition members. Coalition members then, in turn, provided training to people in their own non-profit organizations on food stamp requirements, thereby improving the basic level of knowledge about food stamps in the community.

III. Lessons Learned from the Demonstration

All Coalition members found client-enrollment assistance more difficult and time consuming than originally estimated. IHC envisioned the task as an elaboration of their prior hotline experience, while other Coalition members largely envisioned client assistance as an elaboration of what they were already doing with their target populations. While some members of the Coalition made programmatic adjustments, others did not change their operational strategies. Nevertheless, the Coalition met the demand for reliable information about the FSP and demonstrated the positive role that private organizations can play in addressing this issue.

The Coalition model did not operate very effectively as a demonstration. The project coordinator did not have the authority to ensure that all the Coalition members kept good records of the outcomes of their activities. Reports regarding levels of client contacts, referrals, applications, and food stamp approvals from the agencies were not supplied consistently, and none of the Coalition members could readily assess their progress in achieving their respective objectives and goals. Verification of enrollments was not carried out in a systematic fashion.

IV. Findings

Over the life of the project, some 54,000 copies of "How to Get Food and Money" in English were distributed, with 29,000 in Spanish and 12,000 in Korean. Numerous flyers were also produced [in Russian and Farsi], for recent refugees to Los Angeles. Based on the data provided to IHC, Coalition members distributed information on the FSP to 5,339 persons [42% male, 58% female]. Ethnically, 63 percent were African American, 25 percent Latino, and 12 percent European American. Less than one percent of the clients contacted reported being of Asian or Native American ancestry.

The table below reflects the results of data collected by IHC on contacts, referrals, applications, and FSP approvals. It was estimated that of the 5,300 contacts, 4,000 were with individuals who were homeless. Of the 491 approvals reported by IHC, the majority represent expedited review cases of the homeless population. It is possible that other clients were also approved for food stamps, but these figures were not verified. Because these figures were not verified by the local food stamp office they are not listed in the compendia of all site data.

| GRANT AMOUNT - \$200,000 | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| CONTACTS | | REFERRALS | | APPLICATIONS | | ENROLLMENTS | |
| Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per |
| 5,339 | \$37 | 777 | \$257 | 491 | \$407 | 491 | \$407 |

| PROJECT EFFICIENCY | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Contact/referral rate | 15% |
| Contact/application rate | 9% |
| Contact/enrollee rate | 9% |
| Referral/application rate | 63% |
| Referral/enrollee rate | 63% |
| Application/enrollee rate | 100% |

Overall, the effectiveness of the project is mixed; the enrollment rate of contactees was only nine percent. This may be an underrepresentation, however, as not all of the Coalition members followed through to determine the outcome of cases. Yet for those persons referred to the FSP and subsequently approved for food stamps, the rates were 63 percent. Because virtually all of those individuals known to have applied for food stamps were from the homeless population, 100 percent were approved for food stamps under

expedited review. The population groups targeted by the other agencies were either receiving food stamps through other outreach programs, such as refugee aid, or had already been enrolled in the FSP through the WIC program or public assistance. The numbers of unserved, eligible people were smaller than had been anticipated by project staff.

V. Conclusions

The project demonstrated that different strategies for working with the same population have very different results. One group [HHC] only provided information to the homeless with no follow-up to determine whether clients had used the information to apply to the FSP. Another agency in the Coalition, GRAP [and later the IHC], worked with the homeless population one-on-one, followed-up with individual clients, and frequently acted as advocates in the local food stamp offices. These clients accounted for almost all of the food stamp approvals for this demonstration project. Other groups served by the project [e.g., refugees, some people 65 years and older, and women in the WIC/AFDC program] were either not eligible for the FSP or had been enrolled previously through other programs. Reaching eligible clients still in need of this resource requires strategic planning and an assessment of the true needs of a particular population.

3. Colorado Coalition for the Homeless Denver, Colorado

I. Overview of the Demonstration Project

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless [CCH] is a large multi-service agency located in Denver that conducts activities throughout the State. Project planners designed this food stamp demonstration project to serve urban and rural homeless and migrant populations, which include members of several ethnic groups. The project plan included participation by the Denver Department of Social Services [DSS] and five other agencies [subcontractors] to provide project services. Staffing of the project was to be one half-time project coordinator, and one full time outreach organizer, and workers provided from the staff of the five cooperating agencies and DSS.

CCH estimated that there were more than 9,000 homeless individuals in the State of Colorado at any given time, three-quarters of whom did not use government food programs. Surveys that CCH had conducted with their clients about their reasons for not participating in the Food Stamp Program [FSP] showed that almost a quarter of these people did not believe they were eligible for food stamps. Other clients reported that filling out the FSP application was "too much trouble," they did not want to be involved with any government program, that they had difficulty filling out forms in general, or that they did not believe they possessed the necessary supporting documentation.

In order to overcome these barriers to participation, including inadequate information about the FSP, CCH intended to conduct a number of activities, including the dissemination of information about the FSP and the provision of personal client-assistance during the application process. Client-assistance activities would include helping clients fill out FSP application forms, identifying and copying supportive documents, and providing authorized representatives. Staff anticipated locating potentially eligible clients in both urban and rural areas. In the city of Denver, project staff planned to reach homeless people by visiting shelters and clinics serving this population. In rural areas, project staff planned to visit a variety of shelters and meal sites to find migrants and people without permanent shelter. CCH also planned to conduct training for staff members of public and private agencies throughout the State with the goal of increasing their sensitivity to the needs of homeless people.

During the course of the project, CCH intended to reach 3,000 individuals with information about food stamps. They also intended to increase participation in the FSP of homeless and temporarily housed people, migrant agricultural workers, and Native Americans in rural sites by 30% and among other targeted populations by 10%.

II. Project Activities

Eventually, three nonprofit agencies cooperated with CCH to conduct project activities. La Puente Home, one of the agencies involved in the project, was the center of outreach

services in the vast area of San Luis Valley. The client-assistance worker from this site drove a truck filled with emergency rations and blankets, as well as food stamp applications, throughout the southern part of the State. She assisted many people living in isolated areas and helped them complete their food stamp applications when they wanted to receive this benefit.

Catholic Community Services Northern participated in the project for four months during the summer of 1994. Their outreach worker visited migrant camps and homeless shelters in small towns in Weld County. Here, the project worker acted as an authorized representative and helped hundreds of previously unserved, low-income individuals and families enter the FSP.

Volunteers of America initiated outreach and client assistance to Native Americans in La Plata County. Their worker provided client enrollment assistance in two emergency shelters and in the Tribal Office of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation.

DSS hired an outreach worker for the project, as agreed. This person worked for most of one year under a joint contract between CCH and DDS. She visited homeless shelters and meal sites in Denver to provide client assistance.

Project staff developed materials in Spanish as well as in English and they distributed 500 posters and 5,500 flyers during the funding period. These materials informed clients about the FSP program, indicated how to enroll, and noted the criteria for participation. Project staff not only attempted to educate potential food stamp recipients of the FSP, but also provided training throughout the State to staff of local food stamp offices and other social service agencies, informing them about individuals and families who were homeless and their needs. As one of the staff of a homeless shelter said, "Homelessness' is our label, but it is their lifestyle. It is a cultural phenomenon with adaptive qualities. One of those qualities is a lack of trust of public institutions."

III. Lessons Learned from the Demonstration

The cooperative arrangements with other nonprofit agencies were time consuming to establish. More legal work was required than had been expected, which caused delays beginning work in several areas. Once the arrangements were in place, however, all of the agencies worked together well.

The public-private relationship between DSS and CCH did not always run smoothly. There were discussions between staff of the two agencies on the role of the outreach worker hired by DSS and on appropriate modes of conducting client assistance. Many meetings were held to resolve issues of authority and responsibility, such as where client assistance should be provided, at what times of the day or evening, and to whom the DSS worker should report. Despite these disagreements, the goal of reaching 250 homeless people through the DSS worker was met and exceeded; the worker assisted and helped 450 eligible people enroll in the FSP.

This project discovered another group of homeless people that had not been identified in the State nor had previously come to the attention of CCH. Members of this group were individuals from Latin American countries who had been brought into the area on buses to work at hotels in resort areas. Resort managers had obtained permission for this immigration, but had not made plans for housing. Lacking shelter, the workers were left in small towns to fend for themselves. Many were unable to locate affordable housing and, therefore, camped where they could, straining the social service system of the small communities where they stayed.

IV. Findings

It was necessary for project management to deal explicitly with the safety of client-assistance workers. In the city, CCH wanted to send staff into homeless shelters in the evening and at odd hours to meet with clients. After many discussions with DSS, an experienced, previously homeless person was allowed to do so under close supervision. In the rural areas, the client-assistance worker drove a truck over many hundreds of miles to locate potentially eligible food stamp recipients. She asked for and was provided with a telephone on which to report trouble or to seek help, if necessary. This accommodation made the worker more comfortable and added a measure of safety. Both workers were able to complete their work effectively with this attention to security concerns.

CCH almost succeeded in meeting its goal of contacting 3,000 homeless people and migrant agricultural workers. They exceeded their goal of increasing food stamp participation by 30% among homeless populations and 10% among other populations that they targeted with services. At the beginning of the project, 4,419 homeless households in Colorado were participating in the FSP, but by the end of the project that number had increased to 7,120 or by 62%. In addition, staff in 42% of all of Colorado's county departments of social services were given training about homeless individuals and families and about migrant agricultural workers and their families.

| GRANT AMOUNT - \$99,937 | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|---------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| CONTACTS | | REFERRALS | | APPLICATIONS* | | ENROLLMENTS | |
| Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per |
| 2,326 | \$43 | 1,636 | \$61 | Unknown* | Unknown* | 1,068 | \$94 |

| PROJECT EFFICIENCY | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Contact/enrollee rate | 46% |
| Contact/application rate | %* |
| Contact/referral rate | 70% |
| Referral/enrollee rate | 65% |
| Referral/application rate | %* |
| Application/enrollee rate | %* |

* Application rates were not verified by the county office, and, therefore, these data are missing from the analysis.

The component of the project that allowed for authorized representation of migrant workers and homeless people worked extremely well. Many homeless people in rural areas could not go to pick up food stamps and had no permanent address where stamps or correspondence could be sent. Migrant workers encountered similar difficulties; many could not leave the field to pick up their food stamps. The client assistance worker who delivered the benefit to the migrant camp facilitated the acceptance of needed food assistance.

Project success also appears to have been based on having excellent staff people in all outreach sites. Staff were both imaginative in their approaches to problem solving and diligent in traveling to where clients could be found. One client-assistance worker arranged for migrant workers to have the use of copying machines in farm offices so that they could better prepare their documentation for the food stamp application. This simple step facilitated the use of the FSP by hundreds of clients who otherwise would have had to find the time and transportation to go into town to copy documentation themselves. For farm workers who could not leave work easily, this was critical.

The project also found that many people had transportation difficulties. This not only was relevant to applicants' ability to attend the application interview and copy documents, but to traveling long distances for follow-up appointments. When transportation barriers were overcome, food stamp participation increased dramatically.

V. Conclusions

This project demonstrated that providing individualized services based on the needs of clients makes an enormous difference in the numbers of homeless and migrant individuals and families entering the FSP. They recognized that there is a culture of homelessness, just as there are ethnic cultures that shape the lives of non-English-speaking clients, and that these homeless people often had their own values and ways of coping. Project staff helped others to understand that homeless people are dealing with issues of survival and are often traumatized by daily life. As one client said in an interview, "I can't plan to the end of the month; it's too frightening."

4. D.C. Hunger Action Washington, D.C.

I. Overview of the Demonstration Project

D.C. Hunger Action [DCHA] is a small non-profit organization that addresses issues of hunger and poverty in the city of Washington, D.C., through advocacy, referrals, and a few direct programs. Working closely with national and international food security advocacy groups to analyze data and to participate in policy-making forums, DCHA acts as a data collection center for the District of Columbia. DCHA staff became concerned about issues of nonparticipation in the Food Stamp Program [FSP] having learned from their research that there were still people within certain neighborhoods of D.C. reporting that they did not have enough to eat.

DCHA's executive director and staff designed a demonstration project to reach and assist residents of D.C. who were homeless or were non-English-speaking members of the Hispanic or Vietnamese communities. The demonstration project was the first of two projects DCHA conducted under grants from the Food and Consumer Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. Aware of many of the specific difficulties homeless and foreign-born residents were experiencing in accessing public programs, DCHA planners designed their project to provide information about the FSP as well as to provide personal client assistance in filling out food stamp applications and identifying proper documentation. The information and assistance was to be delivered in ways that would directly address a lack of literacy, a lack of fluency in English, and a lack of skills needed to negotiate a bureaucracy. DCHA staff also expected to answer questions from clients on how enrolling in the FSP might affect immigration and naturalization status.

DCHA has worked closely in the past with the D.C. Department of Human Services [DHS] in both cooperative and adversarial roles to solve problems, and as a result, DCHA staff have established significant and useful relationships with individual DHS departments and workers. DCHA, while not having a written agreement of cooperation with DHS for this project, met with the administrator of the food stamp office and subsequently established a partnership with an individual DHS worker. This worker acted as a liaison on individual client problems and verified the outcomes of the applications made by clients reached during the demonstration.

II. Project Activities

DCHA employed four part-time program aides, each with specific fluency in the language and/or the culture of the population group being served. Many of the staff had previously conducted outreach and therefore did not require further training in this regard. However, all staff received training in the FSP application process and regulations.

As originally planned, project aides provided information about the FSP to groups and to individuals, provided assistance in filling out FSP application forms, identified and

secured documentation to support an application, and followed-up on questions or difficulties that arose during the application process. In terms of outreach activities, two of the four aides were responsible for reaching members of the homeless population. These aides attempted to contact potentially eligible clients at sites where they congregated to get meals, including lunch sites at churches and food kitchens, and at street sites where food was distributed from a van. Activities at the van sites were later modified when it was found that the van stopped in areas of the city that were rat-infested and appeared potentially dangerous to project staff. To increase safety, staff worked at van sites during daylight hours and they designed and used truncated intake forms to shorten the length of interviews. Despite these changes, staff found individuals at these sites unwilling to stop to converse and unwilling to meet staff in nearby indoor settings. Other than providing literature and the DCHA phone number, little effective client-assistance took place at the van sites. Plans to contact homeless people who met at the mobile van site were eventually abandoned.

Outreach activities were also conducted by the project's Hispanic and Vietnamese aides. The Hispanic aide attempted to contact people in the waiting area of a health clinic, at an outdoor farmers' market, and by going door-to-door in buildings and neighborhoods that housed many Hispanic residents. The farmers' market, like the van site, proved a difficult place to engage people and the site was eliminated. Many people potentially eligible for the FSP were contacted at the health clinic, however, and eventually efforts were primarily targeted there.

Outreach to the Vietnamese community was initially carried out chiefly through door-to-door canvassing. The Vietnamese aide proved to be less effective than others on the team and there were difficulties with the manner in which tasks were handled. Eventually this component of the project was cut back to include only the distribution of information at Vietnamese neighborhood sites. Printed information that was distributed included a telephone number so that interested individuals could call the DCHA office to ask questions or to arrange for a home visit. Few clients who were not enrolled in the FSP and wished to be enrolled were identified during these activities.

DCHA was able to employ services from an unpaid legal intern from Georgetown Law School during the project. The legal aide accompanied outreach workers on-site, sought clarification of FSP regulations, and provided legal research when necessary.

III. Lessons Learned from the Demonstration

The relationship DCHA established with the DHS worker in the food stamp office proved very helpful both in negotiating any problems or misunderstandings between clients and individual food stamp offices and in following client outcomes. In fact, this relationship was a primary reason for the success of the partnership. The DHS worker retired towards the end of the project, in the fall of 1995, at a time that coincided with major repercussions on DHS operations as a result of D.C.'s budget crisis.

Staffing the demonstration project with people who had previous experience working with DCHA and who were familiar with both the clients and the issues they encountered helped to insure thoughtful and in-depth reporting on what clients and staff were experiencing throughout the project.

Through the use of regular staff meetings, the project manager engaged staff in discussions of accomplishments and problems and kept everyone on task. In this way, the team was able to identify problems, and the project manager designed and implemented modifications or canceled activities in non-productive areas. At first the project manager did not have adequate authority to carry out project modifications. This difficulty was successfully overcome through negotiations with the project director, but resurfaced again when there was a change in directors.

IV. Findings

In general, the efforts to reach the populations identified by this agency were successful. Applications and enrollments still were lower than expected given the apparent need in the community.

| GRANT AMOUNT - \$72,658 | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| CONTACTS | | REFERRALS | | APPLICATIONS | | ENROLLMENTS | |
| Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per |
| 2,521 | \$28 | 926 | \$78 | 558 | \$130 | 450 | \$161 |

| PROJECT EFFICIENCY | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Contact/referral rate | 37% |
| Contact/application rate | 22% |
| Contact/enrollee rate | 18% |
| Referral/application rate | 60% |
| Referral/enrollee rate | 49% |
| Application/enrollee rate | 81% |

Door-to-door outreach appeared to be of little use in this project. Workers reported no hesitation on the part of residents to open their doors nor unpleasant or dangerous experiences in attempting to reach people in this way, but they found that the people they contacted had little interest or ability to use the FSP. In part this finding reflects the fact that two of the primary populations contacted were Vietnamese and Hispanic, both of which were concerned about immigration status. Further, many Hispanic people who were contacted were ineligible to apply to the FSP because they did not satisfy length of residency requirements. As mentioned, the aide was more successful in reaching members of the Hispanic population in clinics. The contact and enrollment rates from the clinic site, although small, are high given the amount of time staff invested in this effort.

Outreach conducted in feeding centers reached numerous homeless individuals, and many of these clients were able to successfully complete the application process. Factors that

seemed to influence the effectiveness of assistance at these sites included the availability of time to interview people and the space and privacy in which to do so. Instances where interviews or group discussions were rushed did not seem to be effective. In addition, a lack of privacy for conversations also seemed to detract from the effectiveness of the intervention.

All target populations were reached, but it was apparent that the homeless population was the "easiest" and the immigrant population much harder to involve in the food stamp application process. With both homeless and non-English-speaking populations, workers made more successful contacts at sites by directly engaging individuals in conversation as opposed to simply being available at the site, sitting at a table with literature, or waiting to be approached by interested individuals.

In an effort to determine barriers to enrolling in the FSP, information from clients was gathered from intake reports of DCHA workers, monthly reports of the project manager, observations made on-site, and focus group data. Among all populations, DCHA's hypotheses that fluency, literacy, and fears of dealing with a bureaucracy created difficulty for some clients were borne out. Many would-be applicants feared that they would do something wrong. With limited capacity to understand complex forms and directions, as well as to read or write, many individuals chose not to take the responsibility of taking money they might "get into trouble over," despite the assistance offered by project workers.

Many immigrants found that the FSP restrictions on living arrangements presented difficulties for them. Their living arrangements were fluid, and they could not say with any certainty who would be or had been sharing space and food over coming or past weeks. Many immigrants were living in circumstances where they were subject to a relative's or friend's decisions regarding housing and food. For some immigrants who did not have the language skills or shared culture to understand the requirements of the program or the verbal instructions of workers, the help provided by this project was not sufficient. Staff were often frustrated by their inability to assist an obviously needy population.

Among non-English-speaking clients staff activities did not noticeably alter the belief that accepting food stamps would endanger their residency status with the Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS], and therefore a number of clients were unwilling to risk applying to the FSP. Other clients feared that applying for food stamps might prejudice an application for asylum or feared being identified as an illegal resident.

The project's most successful efforts were among homeless individuals who applied and were processed for three months of expedited food stamps. However, many did not go through the recertification process when the initial three-month expedited entitlement had expired. Recipients of SSI were also quickly brought into the FSP.

Members of D.C.'s diverse homeless population traveled long distances between feeding sites and shelters, sometimes having difficulty finding stores in which to use food stamps. These people reported that if they were homeless in D.C. anywhere other than in the downtown area, it would be extremely difficult to get food two or three times a day. The availability of feeding centers lessened the immediate need for food stamps, but the daily journey for food also lessened opportunities to apply for food stamps or pursue employment. Lines for food and shelters began well before the organizations opened their doors. Discussion group participants who were homeless related the difficulties of attending training classes required by DHS, because they had no access to showers to clean themselves or to transportation. The less successful DCHA activities at the van sites may highlight a hard-to-reach component of DCHA. This population was described by other clients and DCHA workers as homeless individuals, who for various reasons, will not or cannot take advantage of organized indoor meals or shelter.

DCHA staff, clients, and DHS workers all described very overcrowded, uncomfortable conditions in D.C. food stamp offices. They reported instances of short tempers caused by these conditions. DHS workers suggested themselves that the ban on food in the offices when people were waiting for hours with children could possibly explain bad temper on the part of clients. Clients cited experiences of being provided with incorrect information and being "humiliated" by not being able to understand or carry out the instructions of the DHS worker. There were instances cited by both clients and DHS workers of homeless men being given "the run-around," to discourage enrollment in the FSP. Many clients believed that DHS workers wanted to serve only those clients who appeared clean and prosperous.

V. Conclusions

DCHA will continue to operate as an advocate for homeless and immigrant populations in the area of food assistance and will be able to apply the experience and knowledge gained working with these particular populations during this demonstration project. The amount of direct client assistance they will be able to provide will depend greatly on future levels of financial support this small agency is able to raise from all sources. DCHA, building on this demonstration, successfully proposed and carried out a second demonstration client assistance project targeted at low-income elderly residents and the large number of D.C. residents living with a diagnosis of HIV or AIDS.

5. Immigrant Center Honolulu, Hawaii

I. Overview of the Demonstration Project

The Immigrant Center [IC] in Honolulu, a subsidiary corporation of the Episcopal Church in Hawaii, designed a client-assistance demonstration project to facilitate access to the FSP by Asian and Pacific Island immigrants and refugees on the island of Oahu. The IC provides translation services in over 20 languages, and is the largest agency providing bilingual training and social services in Honolulu.

According to staff at the IC, most immigrants in Oahu reside in Honolulu, one of the most expensive urban areas in the United States. They occupy, however, the majority of available jobs in the lowest-paying areas of the service sector. Many immigrants were living at income levels that appeared to make them eligible to enroll in the Food Stamp Program [FSP], yet were not using this entitlement. Therefore, while implementing their proposed client-assistance activities, IC staff also planned to gather demographic and qualitative data from clients that might clarify the reasons many had not tried or had been unsuccessful in obtaining food stamps. The specific groups targeted in the funded proposal were Chinese [Cantonese speakers], Vietnamese, Laotian, Korean, Samoan, and Filipino [Tagalog and Ilocano speakers] immigrants and refugees.

The IC designed their project activities to overcome people's inability to understand and speak and/or read and write standard English as well as their language of origin. The immigrant population at the time of the proposal was 15% of Hawaii's population, the largest per capita of any state. IC proposed other activities to address clients' fears that applying for food stamps might endanger other government benefits they were receiving, might adversely affect their eligibility for naturalization, and/or might eliminate their opportunity to act as sponsors for other family members not yet in the United States. Finally, IC proposed implementing counseling and information activities to reduce a client's shame or "loss of face" in being publicly identified within their community as a user of food stamps.

IC proposed the implementation of several activities to enhance access to the FSP for their clients, including the development of language-specific literature such as fliers and posters describing the FSP and its eligibility requirements. These documents, which would be distributed at community events and meetings and made available in social centers and stores, displayed a special access telephone number at IC. The project intended to operate a dedicated telephone line from which calls could be directed to a case worker fluent in the language of the caller.

Language-specific public service messages were to be developed. These would be disseminated by ethnic media including newspapers, radio, and television. The project also intended to offer individual needs assessments and client-application assistance. This assistance would include help in filling out the FSP application form, help in

identifying and gathering the necessary supportive documentation, providing culturally sensitive counseling to lessen any misapprehensions held by clients about this entitlement program, role-playing to familiarize clients with the interview process at the food stamp office, delivering [by hand or mail] the application to the proper social service office, arranging for translation and interpretation assistance during clients' interviews at the food stamp office, and following-up with clients to solve any problems.

The project was to be staffed by seven part-time IC case workers and two administrative staff. The case workers were to be members of the specific ethnic and language groups targeted, have experience working with these populations, and bring to the project a sensitivity and knowledge of the cultural patterns within the specific immigrant communities. In addition, IC proposed establishing a broad network of cooperative arrangements with public and private social service providers, civic organizations, media, and business enterprises within the immigrant communities, from which additional staff would be utilized on the project. DHS would provide FSP training, verify applications and enrollments for clients assisted by IC, and answer questions of project staff as they arose. IC also proposed holding information and training sessions with the three other large social service agencies serving the immigrant community in Honolulu. Staff of these collaborating agencies could refer clients to the food stamp office or to IC if they needed particular language assistance.

II. Project Activities

Project activities were primarily carried out as proposed. One change to the planned activities was the exclusion of the Laotian target population from the project. Laotian immigration into Hawaii had basically ceased, and IC was no longer employing a Lao case worker. As a result, the informational materials and media messages were developed in six of the seven originally targeted language groups, with particular attention to the different language and literacy skills present in the various communities. Materials were professionally translated by a firm that contributed services at a reduced fee, and subsequent translation tests were carried out within the target communities to assure local comprehension.

DHS provided training in the FSP application process as anticipated. However, during the period of the demonstration project, DHS underwent renovation of its computer system and as a result was not able to support the project with comparative data nor to verify client enrollments.

IC staff provided training about FSP and their demonstration project to other social service agencies on Oahu. However, there proved to be no good way to track the success of the training provided to the other agencies either through referrals to IC or directly to the FSP.

Two personnel changes within IC caused some disruption to the project. An abrupt change in project managers half-way through the project resulted in the new manager

being insufficiently oriented in the project history, goals, and activities. During this period of time, one case worker incorrectly assumed that the project was finished and ceased keeping records. Another language-specific case worker was not replaced for many months after an accident, requiring intense efforts to be focused on that population group when the worker was replaced.

III. Lessons Learned from the Demonstration

Despite the dislocations caused by staffing changes and the lack of support from DHS, this project was able to run well and make adjustments to compensate for such losses. One reason for this resilience seemed to be that the project was integrated into a well-operated agency. However, the project would have benefited from having supervisory staff who could keep staff's attention focused on the specific project activities. It is important for these activities to become integrated into the daily work routine. The project also would have benefited from having clearly spelled out and mutually agreed upon arrangements with outside public and private agencies before the project commenced.

IC eventually was able to verify outcomes of client assistance by doing intensive follow-up with individual clients and also by gaining cooperation from some local food stamp offices willing to respond to questions about clients. The more intensified client follow-up allowed IC to uncover other problems clients encountered in gathering documentation, scheduling appointments, and working with the DHS offices.

IV. Findings

Building on already existing networks within individual ethnic communities, IC was successful in contacting potentially eligible clients from the different ethnic communities. Initial contacts with clients, which took place during community events such as Chinese New Year celebrations and at different meeting places such as community centers, accounted for 615 contacts. IC bilingual caseworkers met with 1,681 people to discuss information and literature on the FSP. Almost half of those clients who applied for food stamps, 260, indicated that they had been referred to IC to inquire about food stamps by a friend. Public service media messages placed on the radio [especially targeted to the Samoan community] and in local language newspapers were successful in prompting calls or visits to the IC about food stamps. The messages placed on TV channels broadcasting in the Chinese language were more successful than print media, but much more costly. Almost one quarter of the clients who applied for food stamps, 116 or 23%, were informed about the FSP when they visited a case worker at the IC for some other reason.

The hands-on client assistance proposed and carried out by IC proved to be a successful and efficient method of assisting clients to apply for food stamps. Of the 509 clients who applied for food stamps, 430 or 84% were successfully enrolled in the program. Significantly, many of those contacted by IC or who contacted IC were not eligible to

apply for food stamps, often because they had not satisfied the residency requirements. Of those who did apply, 152 or 22%, had only recently become eligible to apply under rules in effect at the time.

| GRANT AMOUNT - \$48,892 | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| CONTACTS | | REFERRALS | | APPLICATIONS | | ENROLLMENTS | |
| Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per |
| 1,681 | \$29 | 503 | \$96 | 503* | \$96* | 430 | \$114 |

**The 503 applications represented households consisting of a total of 901 adults and 571 minors, bringing the per person cost to \$33, not much more than this project's cost-per-contact.*

| PROJECT EFFICIENCY | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Contact/referral rate | 30% |
| Contact/application rate | 30% |
| Contact/enrollee rate | 26% |
| Referral/application rate | 100% |
| Referral/enrollee rate | 84% |
| Application/enrollee rate | 84% |

Language barriers were cited by many clients as one of the reasons they had not previously tried to enroll in the FSP. Although DHS provided translators, and IC encouraged clients to find a bilingual friend or relative to accompany them to their food stamp interview, many times neither option was available. In these instances, the IC caseworker accompanied clients to their interviews. However, IC staff found that simply having a translator who could interpret clients' languages might not be adequate in and of itself. In order to be effective, translators also need to have the cultural knowledge to allow her or him to explain to clients the questions in the context of U.S. culture. [For example, in many Asian cultures it is extremely rude to ask someone how much money they have.]

IC had expected that clients would find the food stamp application process to be onerous and difficult, and, indeed, they did. Many of the required documentation materials had to be obtained from abroad, which was difficult to do, especially within the allotted two week time. In some instances, IC case workers, trying to find answers for clients' questions, had to visit the food stamp office personally in order to reach a supervisor as telephone calls were not returned.

Case workers were able to alleviate some of the client's fears that applying for food stamps might endanger other government benefits they were receiving. One prevalent misperception was that clients receiving SSI were not eligible for the FSP. IC staff corrected this belief by providing information directly to clients and by developing and disseminating materials related to SSI and FSP. Other beliefs, such as the belief that being enrolled in the FSP might adversely effect client eligibility for naturalization, were not as clearly addressed. The fear that being enrolled in the FSP could remove the client's ability to act as sponsor for family members still abroad is well founded. By

participating in the FSP, clients could not then sign a form guaranteeing that they could financially support someone else.

Many clients noted that they experienced shame when using food stamps. Instances were cited in which clients purchased food at more expensive stores where they were allowed to charge their purchases on account. They could use their food stamps later to settle the bill out of the public view. This method had the added benefit of demonstrating that the client was trusted by the proprietor. Trust is a very positive value in many Asian cultures and one that is absent in the food stamp application and documentation process.

Of the 509 clients who requested and were provided with assistance in applying for food stamps, many were already receiving some form of assistance; e.g., 71 were receiving Aid for Families with Dependent Children, 105 were receiving SSI, and 105 were receiving some other form of public assistance. In addition, 411 clients were also requesting medical assistance, and 297 were requesting financial assistance. These 509 clients represented households made up of 1,472 persons. Most of the 509 applicants, 428 or 84%, were unemployed.

V. Conclusions

This project has an excellent chance to sustain many of its activities, especially if legal resident immigrants continue to be eligible for benefits. Information about the FSP and application assistance are now integrated into the needs-assessment screening services that are provided by bi-lingual case workers to the multi-ethnic clientele of IC. The application for food stamps [a multi-program application form developed by DHS] is on the IC's computer system. Client application and other intake data can be entered by the case worker at the client interview. Referrals should continue to be made to IC or DHS from the other social service agencies, community organizations, and those who participated in, or were recipients of, the public service media campaign.

The IC demonstration project presents a model that could be highly effective, especially if the public/private partnership arrangements proposed originally by IC are fully implemented by all partners. Particular attributes of the project that should be emphasized in a model are having in place and making use of already established networks among community enterprises and organizations, as well as among social service providers and media contacts. Education and personal client assistance that address literacy, language, and cultural differences provided by case workers comfortable and familiar with the clients being served is very effective. Providing assistance through the entire FSP enrollment process, and providing liaison or advocacy functions for clients if needed are other critical elements of success.

6. Project Bread - the Walk for Hunger, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts

I. Overview of the Demonstration Project

Project Bread was founded in 1969 to address the needs of the hungry in Massachusetts. Since that time they have provided emergency meals, operated a hunger and food stamp hotline, and informed clients about the Food Stamp Program [FSP]. Building on these activities, Project Bread intended to coordinate closely with the Department of Public Welfare, which during the course of the project was renamed to the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance [MDTA], to implement the demonstration project. Funding for the demonstration project was to be used to provide enrollment assistance in clients' homes and in alternative sites, and to revise food stamp application forms. The project also planned to develop and implement a media campaign using innovative materials and formats to target population groups throughout Massachusetts.

Through the demonstration project, project staff hoped to identify problems common to a wide range of potential food stamp applicants and at the same time identify issues specific to various particular populations. This would be accomplished by gathering information from surveys and conducting discussion groups. Through a better understanding of these perspectives, Project Bread believed that they could increase levels of FSP participation among groups who appeared to be underserved.

The project was designed to increase food stamp participation among four distinct populations in four different communities in the State:

Lowell is an older mill town about 20 miles north of Boston. About 18% of its 100,000 citizens live at or below the Federal poverty line. In the past 30 years, the community has had an influx of low-income Asian Americans, predominantly Cambodians. Project staff felt that with appropriate information, 1,650 clients from this population group could be assisted with application to the FSP.

Worcester, the second largest city in Massachusetts, is located about 50 miles west of Boston. The city has suffered economic decline and out-migration of its younger population to Boston and the surrounding suburbs. Older people in this community were to be the target of project activities. Project planners estimated that 28,000, or 16% of the community were over the age of 60. The project anticipated increasing food stamp participation from this group by 370 households.

Springfield is the third largest city in Massachusetts and has a 20% Latino, primarily Puerto Rican, population. Half of the Latino population is estimated to be living at or below the Federal poverty level, with only 19% currently participating in the FSP. The project design called for increasing overall food stamp participation to 60% or almost 3,000 persons among this population group.

Everett, Malden, and Medford are small communities on the north side of the greater Boston metropolitan area. With less than 20% of low-income working people of these communities participating in the FSP, Project Bread estimated that 2,600 of the remaining group would be enrolled in the FSP with client assistance.

Based on experience operating one of the more effective hotlines in the nation, Project Bread staff had identified several reasons clients were not participating in the FSP. Reasons included clients' lack of information or inadequate information about the FSP, the fact that the benefits available often were not seen by clients to be worth the difficulty of the application process, clients' low literacy skills, lack of transportation, inconvenient FSP office hours, and past client experiences of discourteous treatment at local food stamp offices. Project staff also observed that clients felt a stigma in using food stamps, and that these feelings seemed particularly acute in older people and those with disabilities. Recent immigrants stated that their inability to read English provided an additional obstacle to applying for food stamps.

II. Project Activities

During the first 18 months of the demonstration project, Project Bread subcontracted with four nonprofit community agencies located in the target communities. Each of these agencies was allocated funds to hire a food stamp enrollment coordinator for 20 hours a week. Operating out of Project Bread headquarters in Boston, a full-time project coordinator managed all project activities, visited sites, and assisted local site coordinators as necessary.

From the start, staff from MDTA were involved in the project and responsible for confirming the actual food stamp enrollment figures at each site. Quarterly meetings were arranged by project staff to keep State officials abreast of the project's progress. MDTA also encouraged local FSP offices in the target communities to cooperate with the four nonprofit collaborating agencies and encouraged the use of waivers at various sites to facilitate the application process.

Project Bread provided informational brochures and flyers on the FSP, translating some of these into local languages of the population being reached, such as Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Cambodian, and Lao. Project staff also developed and aired statewide public service announcements on the radio and television in order to and convey the message of the importance of the FSP to low-income families. A research firm was contracted to conduct discussion groups in the communities to ascertain what barriers to FSP participation they encountered. In an effort to address the barriers identified through the research, MDTA staff worked with project staff to create a video directed to older citizens. This nine-minute presentation was produced for the State and for a national audience; it found wide distribution.

III. Lessons Learned from the Demonstration

Working with a coalition of agencies proved to be difficult, at least in the beginning of the project. Five months ensued before the local community agencies were identified, local coordinators hired, training in food stamp procedures with coordinators was completed, and the local projects were actually conducting client-assistance activities. Staff were hired and supervised locally by each collaborating agency, and staff from Project Bread believed that they did not have adequate control over the performance of all of the groups in the coalition. In Lowell, management difficulties with the initial community agency required that a new agency and coordinator be contracted with midway through the project. Thus, the results from this site were seriously diminished. MDTA conducted a computer search to determine whether clients who were assisted by the project were successfully enrolling in the FSP, but their data were often produced too late to be of the greatest assistance in redirecting the project to more productive paths.

The original projections by Project Bread of the number of people who would be potentially eligible for and interested in the food stamp benefit was found to be high. Clients were difficult to serve, and many did not want to be assisted, but only took the FSP application home with them. Perhaps a percentage of these people did enroll in the FSP, but that can not be ascertained.

Project staff had wanted to obtain a waiver of regulations so that interviews could be conducted away from MDTA offices. The waiver was issued relatively late in the project. All persons over the age of 60 were allowed to be interviewed off-site in Worcester, and a food stamp eligibility worker was placed off-site in an Asian American community in Lowell. Unfortunately, these arrangements were implemented for too short a time to properly evaluate their effectiveness.

IV. Findings

Project Bread's original proposal projected that as a result of the demonstration's efforts, 10,000 additional persons would be enrolled in the FSP in 18 months. At the end of the enrollment period, only 176 were enrolled. Seventy clients were enrolled from the town of Worcester, 42 from Springfield, 41 from Lowell, and only 23 from the three communities around Boston.

| GRANT AMOUNT - \$200,000 | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| CONTACTS | | REFERRALS | | APPLICATIONS | | ENROLLMENTS | |
| Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per |
| 2,080 | \$96 | 576 | \$342 | 508 | \$394 | 176 | \$1,136 |

In terms of overall effectiveness, the project failed to achieve a high ratio of persons contacted to those subsequently enrolled in the FSP. However, the following table shows that clients referred to the local food stamp office with preapplication assistance were largely successful in becoming participants.

| PROJECT EFFICIENCY | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Contact/referral rate | 28% |
| Contact/application rate | 24% |
| Contact/enrollee rate | 9% |
| Referral/application rate | 88% |
| Referral/enrollee rate | 31% |
| Application/enrollee rate | 35% |

The low-income clients had the lowest application rate of those who were pre-screened for the FSP [11%]. Pre-screened older clients were ultimately enrolled 31% of the time and Asian American clients 71% of the time, according to project figures. People who applied to the FSP and were deemed ineligible for the benefit program were denied enrollment primarily due to the fact that they did not provide complete documentation.

A great deal of useful information was gained through the use of discussion groups with selected population groups. Most of the barriers identified at the beginning of the project were, indeed, reasons why people did not apply to the FSP. In addition, discussion group participants discussed the fact that many clients feared making costly mistakes in their applications and encountered difficulties with what they considered to be a very complicated application form. Many noted that they had previously experienced an adversarial relationship with the eligibility workers at MDTA and preferred avoiding the local food stamp office altogether because of its distant location, the types of clientele that gathered there, or because of the way they were treated by staff. Some SSI recipients believed that their SSI benefits would be lowered if they took part in the FSP. Other older people believed that the benefit they would receive from the FSP was not large enough to motivate them to apply.

V. Conclusions

While Project Bread had a well-established reputation for excellent work in client identification and assistance, their previous experience did not prepare them to work with many agencies under dispersed control. The project failed to meet its objectives in terms of helping clients enroll in the FSP, but was successful in identifying barriers to participation and in producing valuable and useful materials. It did achieve a preliminary demonstration of off-site enrollment with MDTA workers and of pre-application assistance without a face-to-face interview with older clients. These activities were too short-lived to produce any meaningful results, however.

7. Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc. Greenville, Mississippi

I. Overview of the Demonstration Project

The Food Stamp Outreach Project was a cooperative effort between Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc. [MACE] and three of its affiliates; Washington County Union for Progress [WCUP], Sharkey-Issaquena Counties Improvement Association [SICIA], and the Humphreys County Union for Progress [HCUP]. The project proposed to identify African Americans living in rural areas in the Mississippi Delta region who were eligible for, but not receiving, food stamps and to assist them in applying to the Food Stamp Program [FSP].

The original project staffing plan included a project director and six part-time preapplication assistance workers. Project staff intended to identify people who were potentially-eligible for food stamp benefits through direct door-to-door contacts and community outreach activities organized through social institutions such as African American churches and community-based membership organizations. Preapplication assistance would then be provided to clients interested in applying for food stamps.

The project proposal identified a number of barriers to food stamp participation encountered by the population of this area, such as lack of transportation, isolation, mistrust of "the system," lack of information about the FSP, and reluctance to visit local food stamp offices because of eligibility workers' attitudes.

In order to build a positive public/private partnership, MACE planned to contact the local offices of the Mississippi Department of Human Services [DHS] in the project service area to secure their participation in the training of project outreach workers in current food stamp regulations and procedures. The project director would serve as the liaison between the local DHS offices and the project.

II. Project Activities

The proposed plan was consistently followed over the course of funding. At the beginning of the project, staff conducted a mass mailing to publicize the project throughout the service areas of Washington, Humphreys, Sharkey, and Issaquena Counties. In addition, public service announcements were developed and aired on radio stations, advertisements were placed in newspapers, fliers were disseminated, and presentations were made at local churches in each county.

Project staff used a door-to-door approach to contact rural African Americans, including low income and older people, who were potentially eligible for the FSP. Staff divided the area they planned to target among themselves and covered one section at a time, canvassing the homes around the small towns initially and then spreading out to the more rural areas. Beneficial to this process was the fact that staff lived in the areas they were targeting and

already had established relationships with many persons living these communities. Furthermore, clients often informed workers of additional houses in the area that they had not noticed. Using these methods, staff were able to ensure that they reached as many people in the community as possible.

During home visits, staff explained the FSP application process and assisted clients in completing their forms. Staff provided transportation and accompanied clients to the DHS office at clients' requests. If clients were unable to go the DHS county office due to frailty or illness, project staff represented them in the FSP interview.

The project had planned to use a 1-800 number so that clients could call for FSP information and obtain a referral to the closest DHS office, but this was not carried out. Staff reported that clients related best to staff from their local DHS office.

III. Lessons Learned from the Demonstration

Staff reported that the project helped people enroll in the FSP who otherwise would never have applied for food stamps. By canvassing the communities, project staff were able to reach clients in isolated areas. However, staff found that some clients, once located, were very hesitant to apply for food stamps even though they were eligible. Of these clients, many either had had bad experiences with DHS staff and did not want to deal with DHS again, or feared losing their other benefits as a result of enrolling in the FSP. Others did not believe that the benefit they would receive, which was ten or twelve dollars, was worth the effort.

Staff developed strategies for overcoming these fears and appeared to be effective in overcoming barriers to accessing the FSP. Clients were assured that they would not lose their other benefits, they were accompanied to the food stamp office or represented in the FSP interview, and instructed on how to use a minimal amount of money efficiently. In addition, the one-on-one interaction between project staff and clients eased clients' fears about applying to the FSP. The approaches used by project staff were not new to MACE, but were ones developed over the years based on their community organizing experience.

Project oversight and supervision was problematic due to the distances between the project director, who was located at the main office, and the client-assistance workers working in the field. The project director dealt with this challenge by developing and requiring staff to adhere to a consistent system of reporting. This close oversight was interrupted when the project director was promoted to MACE's acting executive director. This additional responsibility pulled her away from time spent visiting staff in the field and from developing ties with county DHS office staff. Without such supervision, the level of collaboration between local DHS staff and project assistance workers varied from county to county.

IV. Findings

Outreach staff were responsible for reporting the number of clients they assisted to the project director on a monthly basis. No system of accountability was created to ensure that the numbers reported were correct, and the number of client enrollments that occurred as a result of the project's client-assistance efforts were never verified with DHS. Without verification, project outcomes must be viewed as tentative. The following quantitative data are based solely on reports from project staff.

The project originally expected to identify a total of 10,000 persons from the estimated 58,579 underserved individuals who were potentially eligible for food stamp benefits and who were not receiving such benefits. From this number, the project intended to assist a total of 3,000 persons in securing food stamp benefits. According to project figures, staff contacted a total of 4,861 clients and referred 49% of them to the FSP. Out of these 2,404 referrals, 882 individuals or 36% were enrolled in the FSP.

| GRANT AMOUNT - \$150,000 | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| CONTACTS | | REFERRALS | | APPLICATIONS | | ENROLLMENTS | |
| Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per | Total # | Cost per |
| 4861 | \$30.85 | 2404 | \$62.39 | NA | NA | 882 | \$170 |

| PROJECT EFFICIENCY | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Contact/referral rate | 36% |
| Contact/application rate | NA |
| Contact/enrollee rate | 18% |
| Referral/application rate | NA |
| Referral/enrollee rate | 37% |
| Application/enrollee rate | NA |

Certain barriers identified during the course of the demonstration project illustrated client mistrust of government bureaucracy and reluctance to visit food stamp offices. Clients often stated that they or their friends had had negative experiences with the local food stamp office staff and that certain eligibility workers had been rude to them. Many clients had described the DHS office visit as a degrading experience. Clients reported waiting hours before being seen, an experience that was especially difficult for older people. In addition, some clients indicated that they had either grown up with their eligibility workers or at least knew them, and were concerned with the fact that there was little confidentiality in their communities. Clients believed that there was an unfairness in the way food stamps were given; they felt that some people received preferential treatment based on friendships. People were afraid to report these problems because they feared that their benefits would be affected. Some male clients indicated that men had difficulties obtaining food stamps unless they had a family.

Lack of information about the FSP kept other clients from participating. Some eligible clients assumed that they were not eligible and would not be granted food stamps, and

therefore had not applied. Others assumed that if a member in their family was receiving food stamps they would not be eligible. As noted, some persons felt that if they received food stamps their other benefits would be decreased.

Staff found a number of characteristics among the population that influenced how effectively clients followed the FSP application process. Many clients were confused by the long FSP application form, which included other benefit programs such as AFDC and Medicaid. Older people often complained about how difficult it was for them to complete the application forms on their own. Some clients had low literacy skills which made completing the application and understanding documentation requirements an impossibility without the assistance of someone who could read and write. Others had problems scheduling their appointments, getting to the office on time, keeping their appointments, and following reporting deadlines. Some clients did not understand questions posed to them during their food stamp interview. All these factors put clients at a great disadvantage when applying for food stamps.

V. Conclusions

The project appeared to have met most of its project goals in terms of planned outreach activities. However, they did not develop partnerships with DHS offices as intended. Instead, some of the project outreach staff developed individual relationships with staff in local county offices. DHS in turn provided the necessary training in food stamp application assistance to project staff.

Three key elements appear to be significant in the project's acceptance by clients: project staff lived in the targeted communities, used resources within the communities to publicize the project, and developed trusting relationships with clients through home visit contacts. These elements helped to increase the likelihood of reaching rural, African American low-income and older populations.